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Mr. Vance: Chris has copy of

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

ACTION MEMORANDUM

RECEIVED IN HA:

OCT 30 1979



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TO: The Secretary

FROM: HA - Patricia M. Derian  
ARA - John A. Bushnell, Acting

*by: P.W.P.*

ISSUE FOR DISCUSSION

Whether to recommend to the President that he receive Jacobo Timerman during Mr. Timerman's October 30-31 visit to Washington.

ESSENTIAL FACTORS

Jacobo Timerman, former editor and publisher of the Buenos Aires newspaper La Opinion, was jailed, tortured, found innocent of all charges by both the civilian and military courts, released from house arrest on September 25, expelled from Argentina, and stripped of his Argentine nationality. Mr. Timerman joined his family in Israel. He will come to New York on October 29 to accept the Hubert H. Humphrey Freedom Prize awarded to him by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. Mr. Timerman will travel to Washington for meetings on October 30 and 31 with Members of Congress and other persons who had worked for his release during his 2½ years of detention.

Mr. Timerman has asked to meet with President Carter in order to thank the President for his and the Administration's efforts on his behalf. The President raised Mr. Timerman's case with President Videla when the latter was in Washington for the Panama Canal Treaties signing ceremony. You also reviewed his case in detail during your visit to Argentina in November 1977. Under Secretary Newsom and Assistant Secretaries Todman and Derian and especially Ambassador Castro reiterated our concerns on numerous occasions. Timerman's release has caused the position of the moderates within the Argentine leadership to become more vulnerable to hardline criticism and pressures and thus possibly reduced their ability to effect further progress on human rights, according to our Embassy in Buenos Aires. Army CINC Viola told Ambassador Castro the decision to release Timerman had precipitated serious dissension within the military ranks and that

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

☒ Release ☐ Excise ☐ Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: ☐ In Part ☒ In Full

Classify as ☐ Extend as ☐ Downgrade to ☐

Declassify on Reason

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movement on other cases of U.S. interest, such as the continued detention of Jaime Lokman and Horacio Saragovi --two cases raised frequently by U.S. Jewish groups here -- would be delayed until the discontent settled down. Senior military leaders originally voted 6-3 against Timerman's release; to reverse the decision, President Videla, the civilian Minister of Justice, and the entire Supreme Court threatened to resign. A few days later, hardline General Benjamin Menendez attempted a coup because, he said, the Videla government was compromising the goals of the "revolution". Evidence of such compromise, he suggested, included the release of Timerman, the failure to continue the war against subversives, the expansion of the rule of law, and toleration of court orders returning subversives to their jobs.

The Argentine Embassy here is deeply concerned over Timerman's visit to Washington; in its view, his appearances and public criticisms of the Argentine government could have serious repercussions for the position of the moderate Argentine leadership. Moreover, the World Jewish Congress is concerned that Timerman's criticism of Argentina could trigger a wave of anti-Semitism in Argentina which would adversely affect the Jewish community there. Rabbi Rosenthal of the B'nai B'rith also reports that an article appeared in the Buenos Aires Jewish community newspaper "La Luz" which was highly critical of Timerman's views.

#### OPTION

Recommend to the President that he receive Mr. Timerman for a brief visit.

#### Pros

-- For many people in the U.S., Argentina and abroad, Jacobo Timerman's two and one half year detention came to symbolize Argentina's human rights situation. His outspoken criticism of human rights violations made him the country's leading dissident, and his subsequent arbitrary arrest, torture and prolonged detention made him the most prominent victim of human rights abuse. Many regard him as a Latin American parallel to Solzhensitsyn and Sakharov.

-- Within the U.S., strong Congressional and public interest developed in Timerman's case. Numerous articles appeared in the press, including countless

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editorial columns and an essay by Timerman's son this summer in Newsweek, and important nongovernmental organizations joined their voices in the general protest. His release was front page news in the major dailies.

-- A meeting with Mr. Timerman would provide the President an opportunity publicly to welcome his release and to reaffirm our Government's hope that it marks the beginning of new moves by the Argentine Government to restore greater respect for human rights and the rule of law.

-- The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith initiated this request.

-- Such a meeting would also provide fresh public evidence of the Administration's continuing high-level commitment to the promotion of human rights as a central element of U.S. foreign policy.

-- As Mr. Timerman's visit will be the focus of considerable public and press attention in Washington and will include visits to the Congress, a meeting with the President would seem appropriate. If, on the other hand, he is not received at the White House, the omission will be widely noted.

#### Cons

-- The U.S. Jewish community appears to be divided on how Timerman should be received during his visit in the United States; the Argentine Jewish community appears not to support him at all.

-- Because of the increased publicity and credence a meeting with the President would give to Timerman's condemnatory statements, the probability of an increase in anti-Semitism due to public backlash would be intensified.

-- A meeting with Mr. Timerman would seriously irritate Argentine military leaders, complicate the position of the moderates within the regime who are seeking progress on human rights, and jeopardize our effectiveness on other human rights cases.

-- The conviction widely held within the GOA that positive reaction to U.S. approaches, such as took place in the Timerman case, ultimately will work to Argentina's disadvantage, will be strengthened, seriously affecting those cases that remain.

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Recommendation

That the President meet with Jacobo Timerman

29 OCT 1979

Approve (favored by HA) ☒

Disapprove (favored by ARA) ☐

(Please to Tarnoff -  
Bogoyaniki memo  
making recommendation)

Drafted: ARA/ECA: GJWhitman; HA/HR: PFlood: mas  
10/25/79 X29166 X21180  
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